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ABSTRACT

Two freshman classes and two senior classes at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill were surveyed with the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). The data showed that high levels of student/faculty contact coincided with high student scores on quality of effort measures. It is noted that this may be due to the contact, or it may be that those students who exert a great deal of personal effort involve faculty in their studies. CSEQ research also indicated that quality of effort scales significantly predicted achievement in key areas of student development and added significantly to the prediction of student success when included with other measures in statistical evaluations. Students generally saw the faculty as supportive and available. When compared to a national composite group, UNC students scored higher on the faculty contact scale. Includes one reference. (JDD)

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Student/Faculty Contact and Academic Quality of Effort: Excerpted Results From CSEQ Surveys, 1985-1988

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Student/Faculty Contact and Academic Quality of Effort: Excerpted Results From CSEQ Surveys, 1985-1988

Recent results obtained with the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) indicate that student scores on academic quality of effort scales vary directly with the degree of faculty contact. Two freshman classes and two senior classes of UNC-Chapel Hill have been surveyed with the CSEQ, producing data showing that high levels of student/faculty contact coincide with high student scores on quality of effort measures. In turn, CSEQ research indicates that quality of effort scales significantly predict achievement in key areas of student development and add significantly to the prediction of student success when included with other measures in statistical evaluations (Pace, 1984).

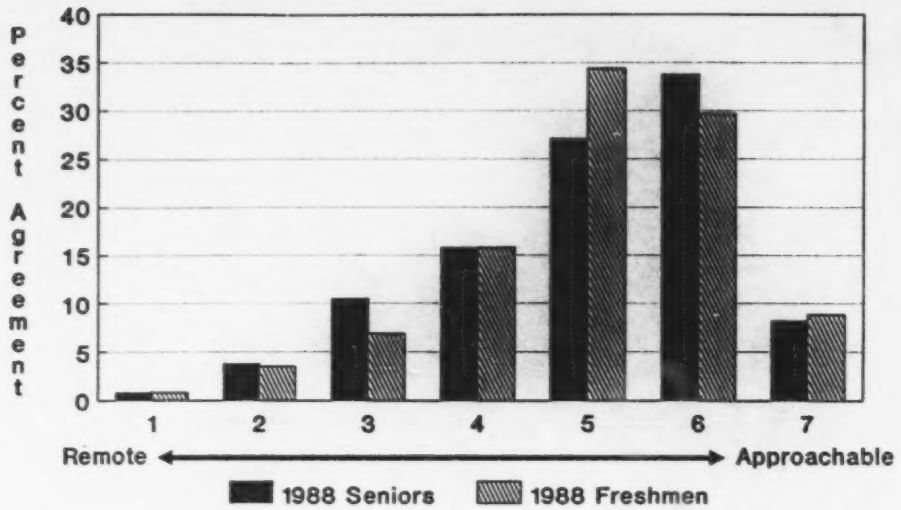
Determination of the level of student/faculty contact for this study came from students' scores on the CSEQ faculty scale which consists of ten questions that ask students to describe how often and in what context they interacted with the faculty. In addition to the faculty scale, the CSEQ contains another question concerning the approachability and supportiveness of UNC faculty. Results from these areas provide data that may relate directly to student progress here at the University.

C. Robert Pace, the developer of the CSEQ, has stated that "All learning and development require an investment of time and effort by the student (Pace, 1984, p. 5)." Colleges and universities have an environment "...intended to facilitate student learning and development" (p. 7) consisting of facilities and opportunities, but this is not sufficient to produce learning unless students take an active part in their education. Pace found 95% of all students in his norm group (99.2% of the 1988 UNC survey senior group and 99.6% of the 1988 freshmen) agreed with the survey question "If students expect to benefit from what this college or university has to offer, they must take the initiative (p. 7)." Student initiative in both frequency and quality is what the CSEQ quality of effort scales are designed to measure (Pace, 1984).

Scale construction within the CSEQ is based on the premise that college activities vary in the quality of their outcome and the amount of energy required to participate in the activity. CSEQ scales begin with items that require little effort and produce few benefits, and build to activities that give high rewards to participants but demand great student effort and initiative (Pace, 1984).

Figure One (next page) gives the most recent results on how available and supportive students feel the faculty are to them. Results are presented for the 1988 senior and 1988 freshman groups asking them to rate on a seven point scale how

Figure 1 - CSEQ Student Reports of Relationships With UNC-CH Faculty



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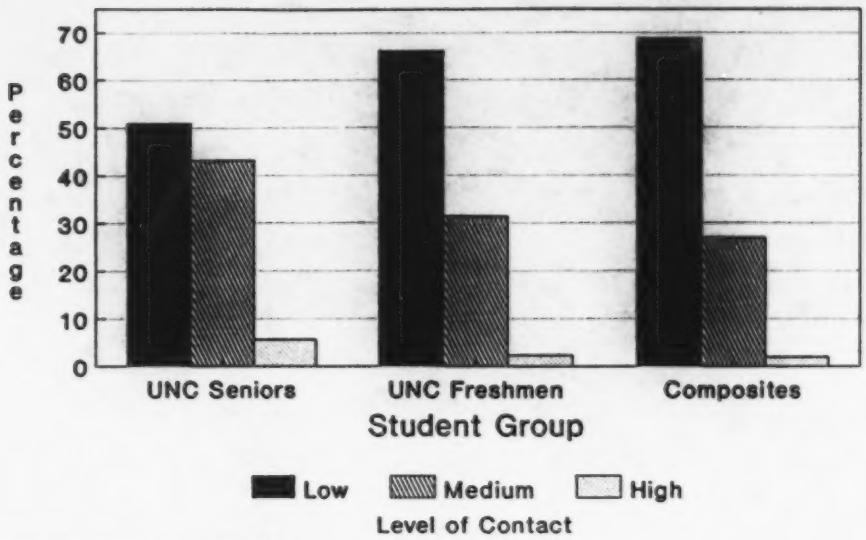
approachable the faculty are to students, with a "7" rating the faculty as very approachable and supportive, and a "1" meaning the faculty is remote and discouraging. The overall response mean to this question for the senior survey group was 4.99, with a standard deviation of 1.31. The freshman mean was 5.04, with a standard deviation of 1.24. Overall, 69.2% of the seniors and 73% of the freshmen gave the faculty a score of five or more on this question, suggesting that the faculty are generally seen as supportive and available.

Figure Two (next page) shows the percentage of UNC seniors, UNC freshmen and a national composite group divided into low, medium, and high faculty contact groups. The UNC freshman group is composed of the 1985 and 1988 survey groups, and the senior group is the 1985 and 1988 survey groups. The composite group is the result of Pace's research, and represents the national average of all undergraduate survey classes for major research universities. Perhaps the most notable result from Figure Two is that a greater percentage of UNC seniors are found in the higher contact groups as compared to the freshmen. Additionally, when compared to the composite group, UNC students score higher on the faculty contact scale for both the freshmen and senior groups. This suggests that UNC students have a greater level of interaction with the faculty than those universities included in Pace's composite group. These results reinforce the data and

Figure 2 - Faculty Contact Scale
UNC Seniors, Freshmen, and Composite



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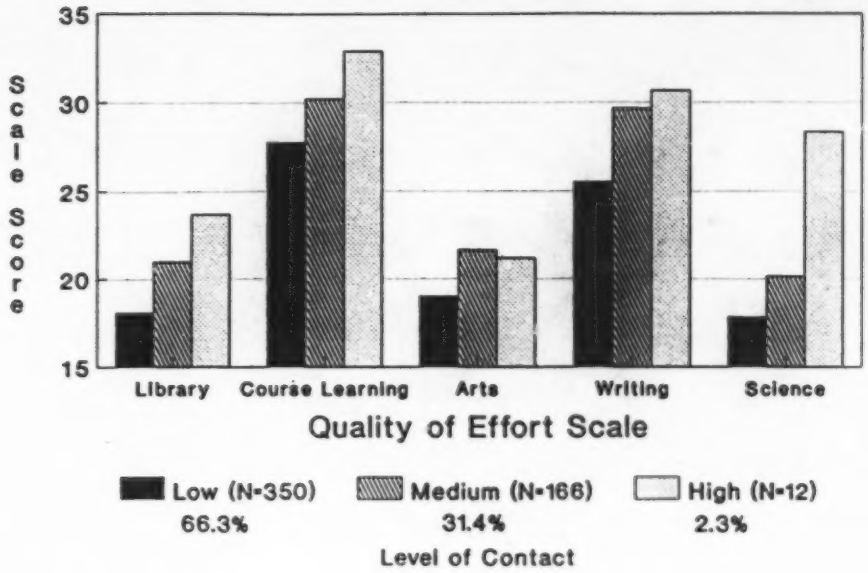
conclusion noted from Figure One relating to faculty approachability.

Figures Three and Four (on pages four and five) graphically present the results of UNC student scores on five different academic quality of effort scales, based on their classification into one of the three faculty contact groups. Briefly, the "library" scale is concerned with the frequency and type of library usage. "Course" relates to how and how often students study. The "arts" scale explores student's activities in aesthetic areas. "Writing" is composed of questions that focus on composition methodology and writing resource utilization. Finally, "science" is concerned with student activities relating to science principles, procedures, and computer usage.

Figure Three shows UNC freshman scores on these scales by level of faculty contact. From the graph, it is apparent that those students who have a higher level of interaction score higher on quality of effort scales. This may be due to the contact, or it may be that those students who exert a great deal of personal effort involve faculty in their studies.

Figure Four shows the UNC senior results on the same faculty contact level and quality of effort scales. The pattern for seniors is similar to that of the freshmen, with high contact seniors scoring higher on academic quality of effort.

Figure 3 - Faculty Contact and Quality of Effort - CSEQ Freshmen (N=528)

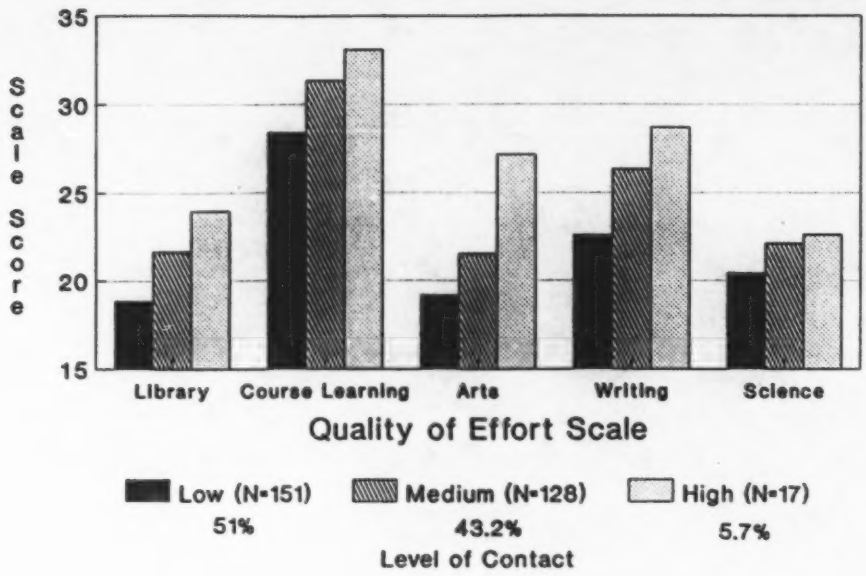


SUMMARY

Large research universities are often subject to criticism because of their potential to have poor faculty/student relationships at the undergraduate level. This survey research indicates two major conclusions with regards to those relationships. First, as compared to Pace's norm group, UNC maintains a higher level of faculty/student contact. This is especially notable among the seniors, and while this may be an artifact of senior coursework, it is also of note that these are "successful" seniors. These students have persisted until graduation, and it is conceivable that the relationships with the faculty were a positive part of the retention process. The students with the lowest levels of contact may have been part of the roughly 25% of UNC students who do not graduate from the University.

The second conclusion that may be drawn from these data is that the students benefited from this faculty interaction. The survey students who reported higher levels of faculty contact also reported exerting more effort in their studies and greater use of educational resources. While Universities may provide strong academic environments, unless students exert themselves, these resources are limited in value. If, as the data suggest, an increase in student/faculty interaction is associated with a

Figure 4 - Faculty Contact and Quality of Effort - CSEQ Seniors (N=296)



measurable rise in use of campus learning opportunities, then the University would do well to boost the level of student/faculty contact for all its students.

Questions or comments concerning this report are welcome and may be directed to either Stephen J. Flannelly or Dr. Timothy R. Sanford of the Office of Institutional Research at 962-3071.

Reference

Pace, C. R. (1984). Measuring the quality of college student experiences: An account of the development and use of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, Graduate School of Education, University of California.

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